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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/123 of 11 December 2002, the Secretary-General again requested the Government of Israel to facilitate the visit of an expert to complete the functional feasibility study on establishing the proposed University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees. In a note verbale of 26 June 2003 to the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that Israel had voted against the resolution and that its position remained unchanged. In view of the position taken by the Government of Israel, it has not been possible to complete the functional feasibility study on the proposed university at Jerusalem as planned.

* A/58/150.

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1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 57/123 of 11 December 2002, the twenty-third resolution adopted since its first consideration of the subject at its thirty-fifth session (resolution 35/13 B of 3 November 1980).

2. The Secretary-General has submitted 21 reports (the last one being A/57/456) on the steps he has taken in pursuance of those resolutions, including his efforts to prepare the functional feasibility study on establishing the proposed university that was first requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/146 G of 16 December 1981. The position of the Government of Israel with regard to the establishment of the university is also set out in those reports.

3. As the Secretary-General has previously indicated (see A/41/457, para. 4), he believes that, in order to comply with the request addressed to him by the General Assembly, it would be necessary to complete the functional feasibility study initiated in pursuance of previous Assembly resolutions. To that end, the Secretary-General again sought the assistance of the Rector of the United Nations University, who, at his request, made available a highly qualified expert, Mihaly Simai, to assist in the preparation of the study. The expert was to visit the area and meet with the relevant Israeli officials, bearing in mind that Israel exercises effective authority in the area concerned.

4. In a note verbale dated 13 June 2003 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General, with reference to the request addressed to him by the General Assembly, requested that the Government of Israel facilitate the visit of the expert, which would take place at a mutually convenient date. Recalling the position taken by the Government of Israel concerning the proposed university, as well as the clarifications already given by the Secretariat to the questions raised by the Israeli authorities (see A/36/593, annex), the Secretary-General expressed the view that such questions could best be discussed on the occasion of the visit of the United Nations expert.

5. On 26 June 2003, the Permanent Representative of Israel sent the following reply to the Secretary-General:

> "The position of the State of Israel on this resolution has been set forth in successive annual replies submitted to the Secretary-General, the latest of which being Israel's note verbale of 15 August 2002. Israel voted against resolution 57/123, and its position on the matter remains unchanged.
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> "It is clear that the sponsors of this resolution seek to exploit the field of higher education for political purposes, rather than further genuine academic pursuits. Accordingly, Israel is of the opinion that the proposed visit of Dr. Mihaly Simai to Israel would serve no useful purpose."

6. In view of the position taken by the Government of Israel, it has not been possible to complete the functional feasibility study on the proposed university at Jerusalem as planned.

7. In addition, following the Secretary-General's note verbale to Member States of 19 June 2003 concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 57/117 to 57/123, the following reply was received from the Syrian Arab Republic on 3 July 2003:

"The Syrian Arab Republic supported General Assembly resolution 57/123 entitled 'University of Jerusalem 'Al-Quds' for Palestine Refugees' and expresses its deep concern with respect to the occupying Power's continued rejection of United Nations resolutions, its failure to cooperate with the international community and its obstruction of implementation of the proposal put forward by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) regarding the need to establish the University of Jerusalem 'Al-Quds' for Palestine refugees.

"The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic further stresses the need for pressure to be brought to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with resolution 57/123 and ensure implementation of the UNRWA proposal."